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Strike at quarry delays work on Flossmoor's Berry Lane project

BY BILL JONES
 bjones@hfchronicle.com

A strike involving a local limestone quarry that has already impacted projects at one local school district has put a long-awaited Flossmoor project on hold, as well.

Flossmoor Public Works Director John Brunke told the village board Monday, June 20, that a union strike that includes Thornton's limestone quarry led to work being paused on the village's long-awaited Berry Lane Drainage Improvement project that began May 7. The Local 150 strike, which began June 7 and is impacting three local quarries, already put asphalt repairs on hold for Flossmoor School District 161 this summer.

"It's affecting a lot of construction projects in our region, including our Berry Lane project, which has been shut down for two weeks," Brunke said. "They can't get stone for the project, so they can't put storm sewer pipe in the ground. They can obviously travel farther to get stone but at a cost we don't want to bear."

Brunke said they have heard the strike could settle soon, which would be "good news." The hope is that it does not go on long enough to impact the village's street program, he said.

Flossmoor adopts Strategic Plan

The village board voted unanimously

to approve a Strategic Plan for 2022-2026. The plan is described in a report by Village Manager Bridget Wachtel as a refresh of the village's 2017 Strategic Plan.

The updated 2022 strategic initiatives include developing greater revenue to support core services and improvement of infrastructure through a balanced budget; increasing property values through the improvement of village infrastructure, beautifying the community and assuring a high-quality housing stock; engaging in an economic development program for added tax revenue, and attracting and retaining businesses that meet residents' needs; fostering a united and engaged community by a commitment to inclusion through fair and impartial opportunity and access; and promoting excellence in service delivery.

Nelson thanked everyone who participated in the process to update the plan.

"I think it's really important to see where the community's values are now versus five years ago," she said. "Largely, they're the same. Through everybody's voice, I think this plan is much improved over the original version we had. I really appreciate everybody's time and the back and forth that went into getting us here."

Wachtel noted there will be periodic updates to the village board on the progress of the plan.

Gregory Berk dies, former chief at Flossmoor Fire Department

BY CHRONICLE STAFF

Former Flossmoor Fire Chief Gregory C. Berk, who served for more than 25 years, and later returned as interim chief, died on Saturday, June 18.

Berk started with the Flossmoor Fire Department in 1967 as a volunteer firefighter. In 1978, he was sworn in as the village's first full-time fire chief. He retired in 2003 with 25 years of service.

He was instrumental in bringing the first transport ambulance into the fire department and building the current fire station. Under his leadership, the department experienced many significant accomplishments, from updating the entire fleet of apparatus to providing the village with 24/7 staffing.

Berk served as fire chief for 10 years in Wheaton, and as interim fire chief for the village of Roselle for six months in 2015.

In April 2020, Berk came out of retirement to again serve Flossmoor as interim

fire chief for a period of one year.

He was past president of the Illinois Firefighters Association and Flossmoor Volunteer Fire Department Corporation; as an adjunct faculty member at Southern Illinois University; and served many other local and regional organizations.

The Flossmoor Village Board paid tribute to Berk at its meeting on June 20.

"Definitely our thoughts and our prayers are with the fire department family and the Berk family, as well," Mayor Michelle Nelson said.

"Former Chief Berk was instrumental in building our fire department," she told the Chronicle. "His work, and the work of his fellow firefighters, saved countless lives and we are forever grateful. He was admired by many and will be remembered for his service and love of Flossmoor."

He is survived by his wife, Donna, and children Rachel, Joshua, and Matthew, who serves as Flossmoor Fire Department assistant fire chief.

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